

A CASE PRESENTING HALLUCINATIONS OF SIGHT, TOUCH, TASTE AND SMELL.¹

By CHARLES S. POTTS, M.D.,

Instructor in Nervous Diseases, University of Pennsylvania; Assistant Neurologist to University Hospital.

W. B. H., aged 64 years, married and a clerk by occupation, presented himself at the Clinic for Nervous Diseases of the University Hospital, on November 12, 1892, and gave the following history, viz.: Family history good as regards nervous troubles excepting that one granddaughter is subject to chorea. The patient has never been a nervous man and has always enjoyed good health with the exception of a severe attack of grippe in 1890. He does not use alcohol, but chews considerable tobacco. No history of venereal disease. The present illness began one year ago (in 1891), and was preceded by an epidemic of fleas in the court room where the patient had his office. Several days after the fleas had been exterminated, while writing at his desk, he felt as he thought something biting him upon the legs, this he attributed to the fleas, and feeling the same sensations while at home, he had the entire house cleaned, carpets removed, etc., in a vain effort to get rid of the supposed insects. After this had continued for three weeks, one day while writing at his desk he saw what appeared to be a large black spider drop down in front of him. He put it, as he thought, on a shovel and threw it into the fire, but it constantly reappeared, and he moved his office from one part of the building to another in a vain endeavor to get rid of it. During this time the biting, which he likens unto needles being stuck into him, continued. After this, in rapid succession all sorts of objects appeared to him; for instance, at nights he would see four snakes, one at each corner of the bed, those at the head would be black, at the foot cream colored, with heads like bull frogs. During the day he would see little elephants, standing on their heads, rats with bread in their mouths, etc.

In January, 1891, he was compelled to cease work. The following March he ceased seeing the elephants,

¹ Read before the Philadelphia Neurological Society, December 26, 1893, and patient exhibited.

etc., but they were succeeded by innumerable worm-like creatures, "as fine as a silk thread and of indefinite length, of different colors,—red, white, black, etc., some having human heads, others heads resembling that of a horse." These objects are continually crawling over him, getting into his food and crawling into his nose and ears; they have a "slimy taste and musty smell." At times he vomits his food on account of them. They continually bite him and he sees them get on other people. He is continually picking these objects off of him. In addition to this, the ground appears to be covered with smaller creatures, resembling small pieces of hay. The patient knows that these objects have no real existence and can reason why they could not possibly exist except to his own senses. Examination of the eyes showed slight opacities of the lens with retino-choroiditis. Urine was normal. Knee jerk is diminished, but it can be reinforced. The patient was only seen at the hospital three times, his last visit being December 23, 1892, from which time until a few days ago he has not been under my observation. The fact of these hallucinations being first apparently suggested by the visitation of fleas (an actual occurrence) which occurred just previous is, I think, of interest.

Examination² for sensory changes resulted as follows: Sense of touch well preserved. Painful sensations as the prick of a pin were felt as something hot, and when compared with a genuine hot object, were said to be the same sensation. Analgesia was present in a few scattered areas, especially on the arms. In a few places he claimed to feel two points as three. Temperature sense good. Testing his visual field for form and color, resulted as seen in Fig. I.; it is seen that the form field is contracted and with the exception of in a few points is inside the field for red. The blue field was not taken. The fields were taken by Dr. Jas. Wallace, chief of the Eye Clinic of the University Hospital, and were verified by several trials. While at the time of the patient's first visit, hysteria was hardly considered, as there was nothing in the man's behavior and appearance pointing that way, the subsequent history since I saw him one year ago, and which is detailed in the discussion, together with the sensory changes above noted, would seem to point towards this probably being a remarkable case of that disorder.

² This examination was made after exhibiting the case to the Society.